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# Ancient Greek Terra-Cottas

La Salle University Art Museum

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*La Salle University*

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**ANCIENT  
GREEK  
TERRA-COTTAS**



# Ancient Greek Terra-cottas

*La Salle University Art Museum  
Fall Semester 1992*

## *Introduction*

**W**ith the recent donation by Daniel and Helen Gaudin of some sixty vases and statuettes, the La Salle University Art Museum has acquired its first examples of the art of ancient Greece, probably the most important civilization of our Western heritage. Our appreciation and gratitude to the Gaudins for this very significant contribution to the development of our collection is unbounded.

Daniel Gaudin was a career diplomat, serving in the American Embassies in Canada, Lebanon, Egypt, Ethiopia, Greece, Iraq, Spain, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg from 1931-1962. He and his wife Helen led a richly rewarding life in the foreign service, one marked by dedicated work, adventure, learning, and immersion in the cultures of the many countries in which they served. The collection of ancient Greek art they have given to La Salle was carefully acquired in Greece after World War II, when they were stationed in the Embassy in Athens.

A few words, then, to introduce the first pieces selected for exhibition here. Although Greek pottery vases were produced for utilitarian purposes, they provide the only remaining evidence of Greek pictorial art from ancient times, for all panel and mural painting have long since been destroyed. The exquisite symmetry and proportions of the vases, the graceful motion of the figures, the naturalism of plants, and the interesting design of abstract motifs which decorate their surfaces are particularly noteworthy. While earlier styles were or-

namented with geometric designs, later styles from the Archaic period on saw the development of the human and animal figures vividly narrating scenes from daily life, heroic or mythological events. It has recently become evident that the ancient potters did not use color pigments to obtain a particular glaze on their vases but instead utilized the physical and chemical make up of the clay and chose a particular method of firing to determine both color and sheen. The figures were often rendered with the use of incised lines in the Black-figured technique and later (by 580 B.C.) the Red-figured technique.

The clay statuettes here, mainly from the Hellenistic period and the city of Tanagra on the ancient Greek mainland, are noted for their freedom of expression, elegance, charm, and natural rendering of the female figure. More importantly, they provide insight into the everyday life of the common people of ancient Greece: their religious beliefs, everyday emotions, their entertainments, and even clothing and hairstyles. They are our chief source of ordinary social history of the Greeks, for monumental public sculpture was usually concerned with an idealized portrayal of the gods and goddesses, of athletes and other heroes.

It is thought that these small pieces served a number of purposes: offerings at graves, dedications for home sanctuaries and temples, household ornaments, and even toys. They were generally made from two molds, one for the back, one for the front, with up to fourteen accessory molds depending upon the degree of complexity of the piece. The pieces were fired,

covered with white gypsum and painted with polychrome colors.

With this small introductory exhibition we express our grateful thanks to the Gaudins for their generous gift. And we rejoice in their enlightened concern that their collection be used by students now and in the future, to put them into touch with the earliest beginnings of Western art and with perhaps the most creative period of our civilization.

Caroline Wistar  
Curator

## CHECK LIST

|                             |  |
|-----------------------------|--|
| <i>Geometric Period</i>     | ca. 900-700 B.C.   |
| <i>Orientalizing Period</i> | ca. 700 - 600 B.C.--influence of ancient Near Eastern art on vases produced in Corinth and Aegean Islands. |
| <i>Archaic Period</i>       | ca. 700-480 B.C.   |
| <i>Classical Period</i>     | ca. 480-323 B.C.   |
| <i>Hellenistic Period</i>   | ca. 323-27 B.C.<br>(Empire of Alexander the Great)   |

## CASE I

(Unless otherwise mentioned all of these art works are made of terra-cotta clay.)

1. *Kylike* (drinking cup) - Orientalizing with incised stylized birds
2. *Maiden of the Acropolis* - Archaic wearing traditional clothing and holding a hinged mirror of the Cycladic style

3. *Covered Vessel* - Geometric  
white clay
4. *Vessel* - Geometric  
(Reconstructed with original pieces)
5. *Oinochoë* (wine jug) - Geometric  
with trefoil lip to facilitate pouring
6. *Oinochoë* - Archaic  
very unusual and rare shape in semi-spherical flask  
form on stand with bas relief of Hercules standing  
by a fighting bull

## *CASE II*

7. *Pyxis* (small box)  
lower section depicts a theatrical scene on stage
8. *Tanagra Figurine* - Hellenistic
9. *Bowl* - Archaic  
decorated with stylized ducks of Egyptian influence



10. *Krater* - Archaic  
bowl for mixing wine and water, the usual drink for the Greek; Black-figured animals, chickens, floral and leaf motifs

### ***CASE III***

11. *Oinochoë* - Archaic  
decorated with stylized deer and geometric motifs
12. *Standing Woman* - Hellenistic  
with typical dress and hair-do
13. *Lekythos* (oil flask) - Classical  
used chiefly in funeral rites; traces of matte paint can be seen in the costumes of the figures
14. *Tanagra - Veiled Dancer* - Hellenistic
15. *Bull* - Late Mycenaean (ca. 800 B.C)
16. *Krater* - Orientalizing  
decorated with painted animals, and floral and leaf motifs
17. *Lekythos* - Archaic  
decorated with scene of fearful men and women running from a beast

## CASE IV

18. *Mother and Child* - Etruscan (5th-4th century B.C.)  
(from Etruria, Italy)
19. *Two Woman Playing the Game*, - Roman  
(ca. 500-700 A.D.)  
*"Ephedrisnes"*  
white clay
20. *Oinochoë* - Hellenistic  
decorated with groups of warriors
21. *Spherical Vessel*
22. *Tanagra Figurine* - Hellenistic
23. *Covered Bowl* - Archaic